## APPENDIX III

### Inaugural Address by Shri Sadiq Ali, Governor of Maharashtra

Mr. President, Prof. Varde, Distinguished Members of the Commission, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am greatly honoured by the invitation to inaugurate the 46th Session of the Historical Records Commission. It is the privilege of Maharashtra to play the host to the Historical Records Commission for the sixth time. The earlier five occasions were in the years 1921, 1925, 1928, 1938 and 1950. It gives me great pleasure to extend a warm welcome to the eminent historians and archivists from India and abroad who are attending this Session of the Indian Historical Records Commission.

I believe you have chosen to meet in Aurangabad for the good reason that the city is rich in historical associations and archival material. We have here the precious remains of a great historical past, of the rise and fall of many dynasties, of one cultural pattern replacing another cultural pattern or rather mingling with it and enriching it. The famous rock temples of Ajanta and Ellora and the Elephanta and Karla Caves, carved out of natural rock formations in several distinctive styles, represent some of the finest specimens of Indian sculpture. We have also here enough evidence of artistic activity during Muslim rule in the medieval past. Maharashtra has a rich cultural heritage with a continuous history dating back to almost the 2nd millennium B.C. Although over the centuries the land changed hands from one dynasty to another there was comparative peace and tranquillity for long intervals and this greatly fostered art and culture in Maharashtra. The leadership provided by some of its rulers and political leaders at critical junctures of time had a profound impact not only on the history of Maharashtra but also on the history of the whole country. The rise of Maratha power in the second half of the seventeenth century is an important event in Indian history. It was a unifying force in the political field. The preachings of saints and reformers like Dnyaneshwar, Eknath, Namdev and Tukaram promoted the social and cultural unity of Maharashtra.

In the struggle for the country's freedom Maharashtra took a leading part. Many places in this State are intimately connected with the history of our freedom movement. It produced leaders like Dadabhoy Naoroji, Tilak, Gokhale and others who played a memorable role in India's struggle for freedom and social reform.

The Indian Historical Records Commission has its own history of which it is doubtless proud. Its chief pride is that it has had a succession of devoted and far-sighted workers who, within the limitations of the times in which they lived, rendered valuable service in the cause of collecting and preserving the records of the recent past. In the early stages this work would have been specially difficult but for the understanding and cooperation the Commission received from the British rulers in India. The



79-M/B(N)242NAI—8

co-operation was not always whole-hearted and the moneys sanctioned for the purpose were not generous or on the scale the institution of archives required but it cannot be gainsaid that the first inspiration came from them and it is they who laid the foundations of good archival administration. They recognised the obvious bond between the State and the archives. It was principally the State which possessed large records of historical importance and it was its plain duty and obligation to protect and preserve them. How this was done before Independence and in what stages, what administrative and technical difficulties were encountered by workers in the field and how they were overcome to some extent is past history and this distinguished gathering knows it well. There was also the question of letting the archival material being used by scholars for purposes of research. The attitude of the pre-Independence Government here was exceedingly cautious but it did recognise the need and met it partially. The whole approach to archives in India was a reflection of what was happening in Britain and other western countries. New sciences were springing up extending the frontiers of knowledge. The science of history was also undergoing a revolution. Its scope was widening. The materials on which it drew were of varied kinds. Love of accuracy and the need for vast bodies of new material emphasised the importance of collecting, preserving and utilising the valuable records in the possession of the State. The same applied to papers, records which private individuals possessed.

The present Maharashtra Archives owe their beginnings to the Bombay Record Office which was established in August, 1921 "to receive and deposit records of the Secretary's office and of other offices in the Presidency Town". I may not go into its later history which saw growth and expansion. The State Government after Independence took several steps to collect, preserve and augment its archival material including records in private custody. Private archives in India which are still very much a hidden treasure offer great scope for research and discovery of hitherto unknown facts.

Bodies like the Indian Historical Records Commission, removed from political and ideological conflicts, can do much to promote serious and genuine research. In writing history generally the accent has been on political aspects. Our records can be made to yield a lot of valuable information on occupation, employment, trade, population and other socio-economic aspects of history. There are many valuable records relating to historical events in foreign countries especially Britain and Portugal. With the advancement in microfilming techniques it should be possible to get microfilms of these records for the benefit of our researchers. Since the work is expanding you are likely to consider the need to have more training facilities for our archivists and scholars. Many of our archives today are manned by self-trained archivists.

India in the recent past has often been taunted with the remark in even learned circles that Indians at any rate in the past lacked historical sense, and that they were more inclined to believe in eternal values attaching little importance to a constant succession of inconsequential events which together passes for history. I will not enter into these controversies nor is it necessary for me to assess the value of histories written during the British period of rule in India. It is more relevant to emphasise the fact

that in response to the spirit of the age and the needs of modern intellectual life and a growing accumulation of material from various sources some excellent histories of India have been written in the recent past and will continue to be written by Indian scholars. The scope of history as I have said earlier has greatly widened. To read a good history today means that one is able to have a fairly faithful and reliable record of what has happened in the past including its most recent phase in almost every field of life whether political, social, economic or cultural. Anyone with a curious mind, and most men are curious, is eager to understand the world he is living in and the various forces shaping it. Inevitably he finds that he can understand few things clearly unless they are traced to their origins and the whole developmental process is worked out. Here we do not have in mind people who think that all history is lies or conjectures or is a wasteful effort to import meaning into a meaningless chaos. They are mostly people who see no meaning or significance in life itself. I doubt if in actual fact they believe in what they say. There are, we must concede, difficulties when some of our historians contend that there is a definite design of a particular kind in the history of man and that it is this design which is being relentlessly worked out directly or indirectly in every event that occurs. In between we have many theories and philosophies of history. It is hardly in my province to talk about all these fascinating theories. We may not be able to place our finger on any definite design or meaning but the search to know historical truth is constant and unceasing. This search for truth places a heavy responsibility on our historians.

In India we have seen how bad histories, histories with meagre factual material but with plenty of speculation or bias and prejudice, have affected large portions of our people and made for confusion, even strife. Some histories also tend to be written loosely and listlessly. It is not easy to write a good history. It requires dedication, patience, a certain moral and intellectual equipment, a conviction that facts are sacred. Histories intelligently conceived and impartially written can be a great cultural force which will help us to build a great nation. We are engaged in building a new social order with high objectives. We are wedded to democracy in which all men and women are equal in dignity and rights. It is not necessary for us to read into the past all that we are seeking to do now, all our aspirations, ideals and objectives; nor need we be unduly perturbed if unsavoury things happened in the past or there was a certain narrowness of outlook in certain periods of our history which today has no place in our scheme of things. Our patriotism should be strong enough to take our past as it was with all its good and evil. In any case there is much in our cultural heritage which can fill us with legitimate pride. It is well to cherish critical methods in historical writings. We have today a growing number of historians in our country who can be depended upon to cherish these methods and be ruthlessly impartial. But impartiality is not enough. With it has to go a mastery of the vast masses of material made available in print as well as in manuscript by the labours of the historical records commissions and other societies and individuals. It is beyond the capacity of any single man to master this material, even a portion of it relating to any particular age. The writing of history involves co-operation in many forms.

India with all the upheavals it has undergone has maintained a certain continuity in its art and culture and with all its vastness has maintained its unity at the cultural level. Since thought was free in our country it was possible for protestant movements to rise and fight tyranny and injustice or expose irrationalities in thought or conduct. Many systems of thought and ways of living could peacefully co-exist. For good or ill there were few violent revolutions or sudden breaks with the past. Scholars have described this special trait of India's culture as its genius for synthesis. This has enabled India's past to live in the present. Some may regret it but the continuity is there with its own message. This makes it still more necessary that we write good authentic histories dealing with the multitudinous aspects of our thought and action. History is, for obvious reasons, an essential and inseparable part of the education we now give to our countless boys and girls. It can do incalculable good if the right spirit pervades the writing of our histories and equally it can do incalculable harm if there is a narrow, sectarian approach or some small ends are sought to be pursued.

The modern period of Indian history in which principally the Indian Historical Records Commisson is interested has obviously for us all great relevance. It started with the beginnings of British conquest of India. Its early forms were crude and brutal in the extreme but its later phases had a different meaning for the country. We had access to western thought. We began to have glimpses of science and its conquests of poverty, ignorance and disease. We were impressed by science and its products and the triumphs of reason. Democracy in the West had also its powerful appeal for us. Our struggle against foreign rule and all its tyrannies and oppressions continued but we did not shut the door on what the West had to tell us in many vital matters. It is now possible for us to take a calm, balanced, objective view of what all happened in this modern period during British rule. It is here that the vast amount of material, which the exertions of the Historical Records Commission have made it possible to preserve, is of great value in writing the history of modern India.

Various researches have brought out how no country was an island unto itself even in earlier, primitive times and how civilizations seemingly separate and independent influenced each other in many ways. India itself has been the centre of much international activity even in the past in both economic and cultural matters. It should therefore be easy for India to contemplate itself as part of the wider world scene and affect it and be affected by it in many vital fields of life. It should easily be possible for it to take to a world outlook and reflect it in our histories.

All great religions, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Judaism have found a hospitable home in India greatly deepening and enriching its cutural life. This also offers our historians a fruitful field for thought and research.

I have ventured to offer these reflections in order to emphasise the far-reaching importance of the activity in which the Indian Historical Records Commission is engaged. May your deliberations at this session prove fruitful in many ways.

I have great pleasure in inaugurating the 46th Session of the Indian Historical Records Commission.

Dr. Pratap Chandra Chunder, Union Minister for Education, Social Welfare and Culture.